Where Dust, Donkeys, and Deserted Kingdoms Collide: The Upper Mustang Trek

Hey there, it’s Michal again—the guy who survived the Annapurna Circuit and lived to write sarcastic blogs about it. This time, my friends and I are trading rhododendron forests for red-rock canyons and yak traffic jams for… more yak traffic jams. Welcome to Upper Mustang, Nepal’s “Forbidden Kingdom.” Spoiler: It’s forbidden for a reason.

Why Upper Mustang? (Besides Bragging Rights)

Upper Mustang isn’t your average trek. It’s a high-altitude desert straight out of Mad Max meets Tibetan Buddhism. Think: crumbling

cliffs, ancient cave monasteries, and villages where time forgot to install Wi-Fi. Here's why you'll hate-love it:

Restricted Area Vibes: You need a special permit ($$$). It's like Nepal's way of saying, "Sure, you can go… but pay up, sucker."

Tibetan Culture Lite: Prayer flags, butter tea, and locals who side-eye your hiking boots. Pro tip: Learn to say "Tashi Delek" (hello). It'll get you extra momos.

Landscapes That Look Mars: Minus the aliens. Red cliffs, wind-sculpted rocks, and skies so blue they'll hurt your Instagram followers' feelings.

Prepping for the Mustang Marathon

1. ***Permits:*** The Paperwork of Pain

Annapurna Conservation Area Permit (ACAP): Standard issue.Upper Mustang Restricted Permit: Costs more than your flight to Nepal. But hey, you're basically funding a kingdom.

2. Gear: Dress Like a Dust Mummy

3. Clothing: Windproof everything. Sand here doesn't blow—it attacks.

***4. Footwear*:** Boots with grip. Trails are 50% sand, 50% loose rocks, 100% regret.

5. Accessories: Sunglasses, a buff (to avoid eating dirt), and a sense of humor (non-negotiable).

6. Fitness: Train Like a Desert Nomad Walk uphill on a treadmill while someone throws sand at you. Practice squats (you'll need them for those toilet breaks).

The Itinerary: A Play-by-Play of Dust, Donkeys, and Delight

Day 1-3: Pokhara to Kagbeni

Drive to Jomsom (bumpy roads, questionable playlists).

Kagbeni: The gateway to Mustang. Windy AF, but the apple pie is

legendary.

Day 4-7: Into the Forbidden Kingdom

Chele to Ghami: Hike past cliffs riddled with 1,000-year-old caves. Wonder aloud, “Did people live here? Or hide from their in-laws?”

Charang Village: Visit a fortress-monastery. Try not to trip over monks.

Lo Manthang: The walled capital. Feels like a medieval movie set. Bonus: The king still lives here (yes, for real).

Day 8-10: Tiji Festival Detour (If You’re Lucky)

If timing aligns, catch the Tiji Festival—a riot of masked dances, drums, and horse races. Locals will cheer; you’ll just try not to photobomb.

Day 11-14: Back to “Civilization”

Descend to Jomsom, where showers exist (cold, but still). Celebrate with a beer that tastes like victory.

Dust Storms: You’ll cough up sand for weeks.

Altitude Lite: Only 3,800m max, but the wind will steal your oxygen anyway.

Food: Dal bhat x 14 days. Surprise!

Why You'll Secretly Love the Upper Mustang Trek

No Crowds: Unlike Annapurna, you'll hike for hours without seeing another soul (except donkeys plotting your demise).

Culture Shock: Villages untouched by Starbucks. Kids still laugh at your attempts to use a squat toilet.

The Bragging Rights: "I trekked a forbidden kingdom" > "I went to Bali."

Tips from a Dust-Covered Survivor

Hire a Local Guide: They'll navigate river crossings and translate your confused facial expressions.

Carry Cash: ATMs don't exist here. Neither do credit card machines.

Embrace the Rustic: Teahouses are basic. Beds are hard. The stars? Unreal.

Final Thoughts

Upper Mustang isn't for everyone. It's dry, dusty, and harder to reach than your ex's emotional vulnerabilities. But if you're craving adventure that feels raw and rare, this is it. Plus, you'll return home with:

1. A camera full of unreal photos.
2. A newfound respect for showers.

Stories that’ll make the Annapurna Circuit sound like a walk in the park.Ready to get forbidden? Pack your buff, leave your hairdryer, and follow me.

Pro tip:

if you want to go trek in Nepal don’t miss to go Nepal mountain adventure. This is the best trekking company in Nepal, the accommodation is best, and the facilities are good. I was going with the other company before, but the trek accommodation and facilities are not good as much I think but when I go with Nepal mountain adventure my imagination got match

– Michal